Upshift to Spring!

The Five Elements are an effective map to well-being as the season change.

BY MARGIT GALANTER

How can you best prepare for the vibrant energy of spring? What if a few basic actions in your daily life could nurture your creativity during this seasonal change? As winter melts into spring, we're reminded that we're all part of a bigger picture of transitions and cycles. The Chinese science of healing links the Five Elements—water, wood, fire, earth, and metal—to the seasons and to personal well-being. With the rich perspective of Five Elements theory, you can nourish yourself through seasonal transitions by connecting with your inner resources and finding your energetic power.

As a guild-certified Feldenkrais practitioner with a practice in qigong, I integrate acupressure and Chinese energetics to deepen the relationship between person and environment. For example, the water-wood aspect of elemental theory can offer clues as to why a client is experiencing lethargy, stiffness, or frustration during these early spring months.

J. R. Worseley, the British professor who brought Five Elements Acupuncture to the West, elucidated the many ways in which health is deeply connected to our natural environment. In March, 2010, at an Acupressure Institute seminar called "Stirring Water, Growing Wood," Keith Stetson, who apprenticed with Worseley, gave great insight into the powerful time between winter and spring. Stetson's talk, along with my practice of qigong, provides a basis for the ideas that follow.

According to Chinese Medicine, the season is a key factor in evaluating our vitality at a given moment. The theory of Five Elements extends beyond simply treating disease to include healing as an alchemical art. The Five Elements are touchstones to dynamic states of change that correspond not only to seasons, but also to emotions, behaviors, movements, organs, and senses. When the elements are in harmony, we experience health, well-being, and the joy of being alive.

In Chinese energetics, winter is associated with the water element, with deep dark blue, and is connected to the *zang/fu* of the kidneys and bladder (zang/fu is best translated as both the organs and the meridians through which *qi* flows). The kidney is the storehouse of innate qi (jing), and water is considered the element of potential and the unknown (and if not balanced, fear and tension). Spring is associated with the wood element, with the fresh green of growth, and the liver and gall bladder zang/fu. The cultivation of the soil enables plants to start sprouting; so, too the nourishment of

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our inner stillness can allow for the expansion of creative action.

From this perspective, the transition from winter into spring is a critical moment for the vitality of any individual and is considered the beginning of the annual cycle. Winter is a time for slowing down, for building up resources, and for a kind of hibernation. Even in warm, sunny climates, people may want more sleep than usual, or its converse, experience interrupted sleep if out of harmony. As the weather shifts, you can be ready for the exuberance of growth in the spring, uncorking the reserves developed through a period of hibernation. Spring is expansion—of plant life, physical energy, and creative action.

The shift in seasons is a big leap for our systems. At the end of winter, you may experience water imbalances, such as shifts in sleeping patterns, exhaustion, wired or anxious energy, an overly driven attitude, or even a flight from responsibilities. Clear out by stirring the water, lovingly encouraging any stagnation to dissipate. You're likely to find that the depth of incubation and hibernation is just what you need to sprout and flower.

As winter draws to a close, wood disharmonies may come in the form of allergies, frustration, anger, headaches, stiff groin, sprains or strains, and digestive issues (to name a few!). Branches of a tree that are moistened can bend and grow, but if brittle, they will crack; so too our limbs require their own form of moisture. Nurture your water element during late winter. Take time to be still, make fewer plans, stay out of the cold, and spend time nourishing your internal life to rebuild kidney and bladder qi.

This transitional time is also an ideal moment to purify through dietary changes. Cleanse with care, giving a break to your liver and kidneys that filter so much for you! I like to take three–five days at the winter-spring transition to eat solely grains and greens (and rare eggs for protein as needed), while drinking generous amounts of water throughout the day. Taking a break from oils and salts at this key moment is a true gift. Liver cleansers include lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, dandelion greens, and milk thistle.

The seasons have a way of supporting one another in sequence, and we can appreciate this more deeply when we tune in to our connection with the natural environment and the time of year. Let the five elements help you map a path to vigor and balance in springtime and beyond. ●

SEASONAL WELL-BEING: IT'S ELEMENTARY!

Try these simple somatic practices to get your body and spirit in tune with the universal cycles and seasons of change. The five essential elements of Chinese medicine are a map that will help you flow through the year with ease and grace.

WATER Nurture your water element as you ease out of winter. While meditating, imagine a cool dark blue filling your kidneys. Exhale with the quiet sound "Whhhooooooo" as if you're blowing out a candle. Imagine you are filling your lower back with the wet blue.

WOOD For your attachment to opinions and your frustrations, the wood element harmonizes through winding movement at the tendons and joints. The best prescription for this is to Do the Twist! Try this in early spring to ease into the season.

FIRE The element of fire rules your passion, your unique voice, and your anger. It mixes with the cool wet of the kidneys to produce qi, as if internal steam is rising. During the summer, sing with friends to enrich relationships, and open your voice.

METAL Your sense of justice and boundaries is guided by the element of metal. In our ambitious culture, it is amazing to hear that perfection in Chinese medicine is considered an imbalance of metal! Deep breathing to soften boundaries is especially helpful during early morning in the fall.

EARTH Your earth element holds sway over change and clear thinking. Try this out during any seasonal transition: lie on your belly for a while, open your mouth, and breathe into and out from the earth.

You Are 70% Water...
What You Drink Matters!
Drink the world's healthiest, most hydrating, antioxidant and eco-friendly water, from your tap!
Alkaline Ionized Mineral Water
Lifetime Warranty
Detoxify / More Oxygen
Mental Clarity / Energize!
Half the Price of Competitors
Proven Superior in Lab Testing
info@perfectwatersolution.com 425.753.5372
Official Masuro Emoto Photo of Water from an Athena
Delphi Under Sink Model